DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 735 EA 028 233

TITLE	Safe at School: A Public Promise. State Plan for Assuring Safety and Order in Illinois Schools.
INSTITUTION	Illinois State Board of Education, Springfield.
PUB DATE	Jul 96
NOTE	29p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Conflict Resolution; *Crime Prevention; Elementary Secondary Education; Partnerships in Education; *Prevention; School Community Relationship; *School Safety; *School Security; *State Action; Student Behavior; Violence
IDENTIFIERS	*Illinois

ABSTRACT

Parents and members of the public want safe schools that are free of violence. This document explicates Illinois' state plan for ensuring safety and order in its public schools. The plan contains 44 steps that are designed to commit the state to school s. fety; restore safety and order; implement conflict-resolution programs; prevent violence by confronting deeply rooted societal conditions; and develop administrative procedures for implementing, evaluating, and sharing information about school violence-prevention programs. The plan is guided by four major parameters: (3) educators and school districts need help; (2) both immediate and long-term strategies are necessary; (3) the local community must be the focus of action; and (4) resources must be used with maximum efficiency and effectiveness. (LMI)

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A PUBLIC PROMISE

A State Plan for Assuring Safety and Order in Illinois Schools

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SAFE AT SCHOOL
A Public Promise

A State Plan for Assuring Safety and Order in Illinois Schools

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Violence has made its entrance into the schools of Illinois, announced by the presence of guns, the scrawl of gang graffiti and the harsh language of intimidation and harassment. Once considered an urban problem, violence is spreading to every community in the state, reaching into the schools, turning playground arguments into potentially lethal conflicts and placing all children at risk. As a result, safety and order have become primary concerns of parents, educators and students.

This is not the first time that violence has intersected with the education of children. In the 1860s, the Civil War took its toll on an emerging educational system. In the 1960s, civil strife often ended in violent confrontations at the schoolhouse door. But this *is* the first time that violence has become a reality inside the schools and classrooms, most often perpetrated by the children themselves. This is the first time that the violence affecting schools has been so random and capricious, so apparently without meaning, and so pervasive.

To quote from the foreword to *Hidden Casualties: the Relationship between Violence and Learning*:

> Twenty years ago, we thought children were safe in their homes. Then we learned about the physical and sexual abuse visited upon some children in their homes....We thought children were safe in their neighborhoods, particularly the suburbs and rural areas. But slowly violence has crept into the suburbs and into rural areas across America.... We thought children were safe in schools. But some schools have become armed camps, trying to protect students from the dangers outside the walls as well as the dangers inside....

There appear to be no more safe places for children.

With respect to the schools, this circumstance is simply not tolerable.

There is, in the first place, a moral and ethical obligation to ensure the safety of children while they are in school. Our society has required that all children be educated, and it has established a system of public schools to provide that education. Parents who have entrusted their

children to these schools have a right to expect that the students will be reasonably protected from harm. Schools have an inherent responsibility to meet that expectation.

Second, the safety of our children while they are in school must be ensured so that their full attention can be given to the process of learning. At the very least, violence in schools is a serious distraction. In the prosaic words of AFT President Albert Shanker:

> Over the last decade or more, we've had a national debate on the issue of school quality, and there is a broad consensus that we need to do a lot more....However, none of these changes will do any good unless we meet certain basic conditions. Schools have to be safe and classrooms have to be orderly. Without that, reforms are nonsense. You can deliver a terrific curriculum, but if youngsters are throwing things, cursing and yelling and punching each other, the curriculum doesn't mean a thing in that classroom.

Recent research on the interaction of brain chemicals and stress has proven that children whose energies are needed to deal with fear and danger are physically unable to deal with the learning process and may even suffer permanent brain damage. While the child's home and family experiences are significant in this equation, the violence children experience in schools can and does directly impair their ability to learn. Schools must provide an environment which is both safe for and conducive to learning, or that learning will not occur.

Finally, the issue of school safety is directly linked to the preservation of the Jeffersonian concept of universal public education. It is difficult to envision a true democracy which does not embrace this concept, yet it seems to be in increasing jeopardy. According to recent surveys by the Public Agenda Foundation, parents of children in public schools—parents who have traditionally had a great deal of confidence in those schools—are now indicating that they would prefer their children to be in private schools. Bombarded by media reports about the level of violence and the low academic performance in public schools, these parents, as well as much of the general public, have concluded that there must be a better way. This has resulted in widespread interest in alternatives

such as charter schools, vouchers and home schooling.

Parents and members of the public want safe schools that are free of violence. They want their children to be able to master basic skills which are defined as not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but the ability to use these skills to solve problems. They want their children to enter adulthood and the workplace with the values and character that will enable them to be successful and productive. If these expectations are not met, the system of public education for all may well be abandoned, and we will have a caste system of educational haves and have nots.

We cannot allow that to happen. Instead, we must make the restoration of safety and order in Illinois schools one of our highest priorities. ■

The Call for *Action*

To be safe at school is a promise made by our society to its children, their families and their teachers. But that promise is becoming increasingly difficult to keep as the violence which has become so pervasive in our communities insidiously makes its way into the schools. Despite the millions of words spoken and written about the subject, despite the many initiatives already begun, data indicate that the problem is getting worse. We obviously must do more if we are going to reverse that trend and restore safety and order to Illinois schools.

Based on the research about violence and a review of programs and strategies already in place, there are at least four major parameters which should guide our next steps toward reducing and eventually eliminating violence in our schools.

➲ **Educators and school districts can't succeed by themselves.**

Violence is an extraordinarily complex phenomenon with biological, social, emotional and economic roots. There is no way to address it other than through collaborative, multi-faceted efforts which engage a full range of societal institutions, including but not limited to, the schools.

➲ **Both immediate and long-term strategies are necessary.**

Changing the factors contributing to the increase in violence in our schools cannot be accomplished through a "quick fix." We need long-term vision and the patience and will to focus time, attention and resources on long-term prevention and intervention strategies. However, the problems of the moment must also be addressed. We must make immediate efforts to stop the spreading epidemic of violence and the free-fall into fear and hopelessness which has accompanied it.

➲ **The local community must be the focus of action.**

State and federal efforts can set the stage and provide support for violence prevention and intervention strategies. However, the infinite differences among Illinois communities make it imperative to focus our efforts primarily at the local

level. Individuals seeking to create violence-free schools and communities must be able to respond to the uniqueness of their own circumstances, to move forward with the human and other resources already available, and to make directional and procedural adjustments quickly and often.

➲ **Resources must be used with maximum efficiency and effectiveness.**

Many of the strategies proposed for addressing violence are time and labor intensive and very expensive. Conversely, violence itself is expensive, resulting in damage to property and lives. In the fight against violence, we cannot afford turf battles, duplication of effort or the exploration of interesting subissues. We need to move forward as quickly and effectively as possible. We need to build on past accomplishments and knowledge, and we need to work together as one united force.

The following plan of action has been developed within these parameters. The plan reflects the work of a statewide policy summit on school violence issues held in 1995, as well as ongoing discussions among educators, law enforcement officials and social service personnel. It was adopted by the State Board of Education in February 1996. Implementation of the plan will occur in cooperation with Illinois Attorney General Jim Ryan, whose office was influential in the planning process, and with the assistance of an advisory group representing educators, parents and violence prevention experts.

Obviously, no single set of strategies can reflect a total understanding of a problem so complex or include all that can or should be done. The plan is expected to grow and evolve over time. However, it is put forward now as a place to start.

With this plan we can begin to fulfill the public promise that Illinois children will be safe at school. ■

The Plan of *Action*

A PUBLIC COMMITMENT

The power of a public commitment has been illustrated many times in history, with the wartime speeches of Winston Churchill and the inaugural speech of John F. Kennedy standing as well-known examples.

Words alone obviously will not solve the problem of violence in our schools and communities. However, it is essential that the State's commitment to restoring safety and order in Illinois schools be put into words and communicated through the leadership of the education and law enforcement communities.

The legislative declaration, which is part of the 1995 alternative school bill (Public Act 89-383), indicated that:

> (a) The children of this State constitute its most important resource, and in order to enable those children to reach their full potential, the State must provide them the quality public education that the Constitution of the State of Illinois mandates; (b) The State cannot provide its children with the education they deserve and require unless the environment of the public schools is conducive to learning; (3) That environment cannot be achieved unless an atmosphere of safety prevails, assuring that the person of each student, teacher, and staff member is respected, and that none of these people are subjected to violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, or otherwise confrontational or inappropriate behaviors that disrupt the educational atmosphere.

That message now needs to be translated into a public commitment to restoring safety and order to Illinois schools. It is therefore agreed that the following steps will be taken.

1

1. The State Board of Education will revise the Illinois Goals to explicitly include the State's commitment to providing schools which are safe

and orderly and provide an environment appropriate and conducive to teaching and learning.

2. The State Board of Education will adopt a policy statement which indicates its zero tolerance for violence in schools and its commitment to an immediate and intensive campaign aimed at restoring safety and order and building an environment which supports teaching and learning. This policy will emphasize collaboration with education, law enforcement, social service groups and others.

3. The State Superintendent of Education and the Illinois Attorney General will become visible and proactive leaders for efforts to eliminate violence from Illinois schools. This will include advocating appropriate legislation and funding; opposing circumstances which promote or foster violence among young people; providing administrative priorities for staff and entities for which they have responsibility; and coordinating with all groups—public and private, federal, state and local—which can be of assistance in this campaign.

4. The State Superintendent will devote the 1996 Annual Superintendent's Conference to issues related to violence prevention and intervention.

RESTORING SAFETY AND ORDER

The issue of violence in schools seems to elicit in many people one of two reactions: frustration that violence is a part of life in the larger society and therefore impossible to really do anything about, or relieved disinterest because the observable manifestations of violence have not yet reached their schools or their children. Neither of these is an acceptable response to the children who are afraid to come to school, or whose learning is disrupted by the acting out behaviors of two or three classmates, or who know (even if the adults don't) that gangs are beginning to make an

appearance in their communities. It is imperative that we do not simply acknowledge and bemoan the problem; it is imperative that we do something about it now.

The following actions are intended to establish a turning point, that is, a point at which the spread of violence into Illinois schools is interrupted and reversed through policies and procedures which place a premium on the protection of our schoolchildren. Some of these actions are presented as commitments by the State Board of Education; others are actions which the Board hopes will be taken by others.

5. The 1996-97 school year will be formally identified as a year in which Illinois will target its energies and resources to restoring safety and order in Illinois schools. During this year, leaders at the state and local level will give highest priority to making the statutory and procedural changes necessary to protect our children and the learning process. This will be the first stage in a multi-year effort, with the goal of implementing the full plan by the year 2000.

6. The State Board of Education will compile and widely disseminate the laws defining behavior which is illegal in and around schools and the required responses by schools and law enforcement officials. This will be provided in language which is precise and understandable to the reader so that schools, parents, students, law enforcement officials and citizens will have no doubt about prohibited behavior and its consequences.

7. The State Board will seek to modify state laws to do the following:

   a) clearly prohibit guns of any kind and in any condition, as well as other devices or weapons whose purpose is to cause damage to others, on school property or within a certain radius of the school (the only exceptions should be when firearms are in the possession of law enforcement officials or the school-sponsored ROTC);

   b) establish clearly defined and officially marked "safe learning zones" in which the use, possession or sale of real or look-alike weapons, drugs and alcohol must be reported to the police and for which

there are clearly established consequences appropriate to the level of the threat;

c) require reporting of all gun and weapon violations to the State Board of Education;

d) better define all juvenile laws relating to violent acts; and

e) require that persons convicted of violent criminal offenses in or around schools serve the full minimum term of their sentence ("truth in sentencing").

8

8. Each local school board in Illinois should give top priority to reviewing its discipline policies to ensure that they (1) are consistent with state and federal laws, many of which have changed within the past three years and (2) clearly define the consequences of unacceptable behavior (see #10 below).

   The participants in this review should include not only parents and teachers, as is now required in the law regarding the development of discipline policies, but also administrators, related services personnel (e.g., counselors, social workers, psychologists, etc.), students in schools serving students in grades 3-12, local law enforcement officials, and community members who have no other direct link to the schools.

   The policies should include provisions for parental and student responsibility. For example, the school might require that parents sign an annual statement or "contract" that they have reviewed the policies and will support their child's conformance to the regulations. Students in grades 5-12 could also be asked to sign a statement indicating their own knowledge of the policies.

   The local school board should hold its staff accountable for the consistent and judicious application of its discipline policies.

   The State Board of Education will develop guidelines to assist local school districts in developing and implementing discipline policies.

9

THE PLAN OF ACTION Continued

These will include a protocol for consideration of suspension and expulsion.

9

9. To address the problem of sexual harassment in schools, the State Board of Education will periodically provide local school districts with information about the definition of and legal requirements related to such harassment. Each local school district should include policies and procedures related to sexual harassment in its student discipline policies and ensure that these are made known to students, staff and parents. The safe school audits conducted by local schools (see #13 below) should include monitoring of areas where harassment usually occurs, and each district's inservice training program for staff should include regular training on identification, intervention and prevention of sexual harassment.

10

10. Each local school district should provide a clearly defined continuum of strategies for responding to unacceptable behavior by students or others in the school setting. These district options for intervention/discipline should be made known to each student, parent or guardian and staff member.

    The options for responding to disruptive behavior should not be limited to repeated trips to the principal's office or suspension/expulsion. The National Association of State Boards of Education study report "Schools Without Fear" suggests that the alternative consequences of unacceptable behavior include in-school suspension, school service projects, community service projects, home instruction, evening and weekend academics and counseling programs.

11

11. To provide school districts with a resource for seriously disruptive youth, a system of alternative schools, as authorized by the General Assembly, should be implemented by the FY97 school year. To this end, the State Board of Education will work with Regional Superintendents, local district representatives, and individuals with experience in working with disruptive youth and/or alternative education to identify the program and service characteristics which must be reflected in these schools to ensure their educational integrity and rehabilitative value.

This process should also determine the funding necessary for these schools to be successful, respond to problems and issues which have been identified through public hearings, and develop rules and regulations for the operation of the schools.

The State Board of Education will include a $6 million line item for alternative schools in its FY97 budget request, with the understanding that the amount will be modified to reflect the amount needed to adequately support the proposed program model(s).

12

12. Each local school board should develop policies (or review those already in existence) which (1) govern the conduct and management of people who come onto school property during the school day and for after-school activities and (2) identify the expectations/requirements for adult accompaniment and supervision of young children attending public events on school property. These policies should be made widely known.

13

13. Each local school should establish a "Safe School Committee" which includes teachers, parents, students, neighbors and community representatives, including law enforcement officials. During the 1996-97 school year, each Committee should (1) conduct an audit of the school's safety and security and (2) develop a school safety plan for addressing identified problems.

    In the conduct of its safe school audit, the Safe School Committee should examine the floor plan and architectural layout of the school and its surrounding area to identify locations which may lend themselves to violence or inappropriate behavior (e.g., dead-end corridors). The Committee should also consider the need for the increased application of technology such as "hotlines" for reporting drugs and gun activity on school property, telephones and other devices to summon help, and metal detectors or other similar devices.

    The local school board should aggregate these findings and recommendations into a district-wide "Safe School Plan" and vigorously pursue its implementation. The board should also ensure that the

school-level audits are reviewed and updated on a regular basis in the future.

The State Board of Education, in cooperation with IASB, IASA and IPA, will provide technical assistance to schools and school districts for the conduct of the safety audit. This would include making available relevant models/ protocols such as the guides to safety audit procedure and content which have been developed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Educational Service.

14

14. The State Board of Education will seek legislation which will broaden the state drug education program to make that funding available for violence prevention and intervention, including the implementation of local safe school plans. The State Board will seek an increase of the funding for this program for FY97 from $4,486,200 to $7 million. Grants should be awarded based on evidence of need for immediate intervention.

The State Board of Education will also provide school districts with information about other funds which can be accessed to address school safety issues. These include health/life safety funds and up to 20% of the federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools grants.

15

15. Each local school district should complement its school safety audit with intensive inservice training of all staff regarding effective techniques for dealing with violent/disruptive youth and addressing safety issues. Such training should reach all Illinois school employees during the 1996-97 school year.

The State Board of Education will target funds for assisting school districts in developing and implementing such training.

16

16. To ensure safe access by children to their schools, state funding should be provided to allow local school districts (and parents/guardians) to provide free transportation to students residing within 1.5 miles of the school where conditions are such that walking to school constitutes a hazard due to "persistent criminal activity." This term should be

defined by the State Police, and local law enforcement officials should approve the school district's determination that such a hazard exists.

If a school district determines that other measures, such as increased adult or police presence while children are going to and from school, are more cost-efficient or effective than providing transportation, the district should receive reimbursement of an approved program through the state transportation funding appropriation.

The State Board of Education will request a $5 million increase in state funding of the transportation program to support this effort to make sure that children are safe en route to and from school.

17. The State Board of Education will seek legislation to clarify a school district's latitude regarding a transfer student who is not in good standing in his/her former school district (i.e., he/she has been recently suspended or expelled). If there is reasonable evidence that such a student presents a serious threat to the physical safety of other students, the receiving school district should be allowed to assign that student directly to an alternative school or to deny admission until there is reasonable evidence that the threat no longer exists.

18. Local school boards should be responsive to public and parental concerns about safety. Parents who are concerned about school safety should have reasonable recourse to the local school board, and this should be spelled out in the district's policies. For example, in addition to making parents aware of the regular public comment period during each school board meeting, it might be appropriate to require that a public hearing be convened when more than a designated number or percentage of the parents/guardians submit a written complaint to their school board about safety matters.

19. The State Board of Education will take the lead in identifying and addressing issues associated with safe-haven programs, such as the Block Home program, and make appropriate information available to communities and schools. Ideally, the area around each Illinois school should have one or more such locations where a child could seek safety in case of a threatening circumstance.

KEEPING THE PEACE

At the same time that we are dealing with the problems of the moment, we must give our attention to strategies which will maintain safety and order and establish an environment conducive to learning and appropriate behavior.

Much has been learned from the violence prevention work throughout America, particularly in its cities, during the last decade. We know that violence is usually a learned behavior, acquired by children through observation of family and community violence, the influence of the media and the behavior of alleged role models, and inferences drawn when violent or disruptive behavior seems to have no consequences. We know that violence feeds upon itself, escalating and expanding in the absence of intervention. We know that the programs with which schools and community partnerships have been most successful in working with at-risk and disruptive youth have had four common components: caring relationships with adults; social services; a focus on life skills; and work, either voluntary or paid. We know there are many strategies that can reduce disruption and some that may simply make things worse. We know that there is probably no problem an Illinois school district can confront that has not been faced by someone else.

The actions and recommendations which follow are intended to reflect and build upon that knowledge.

20

20. To support appropriate student behavior, schools with a large student enrollment (e.g., more than 500 students) should be restructured in ways (such as the "schools within schools" model) which will make it possible for students and teachers to know one another, for students to feel personally valued, and for a variety of individual needs to be recognized and met. To this end, the State Board of Education will give priority to making local school boards, administrators and staffs aware of the importance of structural/organizational elements in preventing violence and creating a supportive learning environment.

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21. To provide an environment in which differences can be resolved without violence, all local schools should establish procedures for mediation and resolution of conflict. Particular emphasis should be given to peer mediation, which builds skills for use by students in a variety of settings and situations. The State Board of Education will provide leadership and financial support for the establishment of such programs in local school districts.

22. To provide an environment conducive to healthy competition and appropriate role models, the State Board of Education and the Office of the Attorney General will work with local school districts, the Illinois High School Association and local law enforcement officials to promote good sportsmanship and respond consistently and authoritatively to violence related to athletics and other interscholastic activities.

23. To give school district personnel the opportunity to easily identify and talk with their peers who have been successful in developing violence prevention and intervention strategies, the State Board will establish an Internet news group which will allow Illinois educators to engage in electronic dialogue with one another about violence-related problems and solutions.

    The State Board will also continue its support for the work of the Illinois Council on the Prevention of Violence in reviewing violence-prevention curricula, preparing resource guides for distribution to local school districts, and researching the effectiveness of violence-prevention strategies.

24. To ensure that information about youth engaging in criminal behavior is reciprocally available to schools and the law enforcement system, each community and/or county should have a standing committee which reviews information-sharing procedures and addresses communication problems. (The Education and Law Enforcement Partnership Committee of Southwestern Illinois provides a model for this kind of cooperation.)

15

THE PLAN OF ACTION Continued

The Attorney General and the State Superintendent of Education, working with state educational and law enforcement organizations, will identify actions which will promote effective cooperation and communication, including the removal of identified communication barriers.

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25. To ensure that school district personnel have information about gang activity and behavior, law enforcement officials should notify school officials about gang activity in their community or area and provide them with information about what might be expected. School administrators and teachers should also be provided with training regarding gang signs, behavior, etc. The State Superintendent and the Attorney General will develop procedures for meeting these goals.

26

26. To ensure that teachers, administrators and other school personnel have the skills to prevent and/or deal with disruptive behavior, the State Board of Education will work with appropriate others, including the Illinois Principals Association and the Illinois Association of School Administrators, to accomplish the following.

- Administrator Academy requirements should be modified to include training in classroom management, conflict resolution and violence prevention strategies.

- Standards for initial certification and the renewal of certificates for teachers and school support personnel should include the acquisition of skills in classroom management, conflict resolution and violence prevention.

27

27. To reduce teacher isolation and assist teachers in dealing with students who display disruptive or violent behavior, the State Board of Education will work with teacher and administrator organizations to identify actions which will result in an effective teacher support system. This might include establishing a "teacher help line" through which teachers can consult with people who have had experience in dealing with such students, giving each teacher a phone or other means for securing help in volatile situations, and/or increasing the availability of anti-violence specialists to work with teachers.

28

28. To ensure that policies, procedures and curriculum are relevant to the needs and concerns of students, local school districts should engage their students in planning and decision making. Several Illinois schools have a "Principal's Advisory Committee" which provides a reality-check for administrators and gives students a feeling that they can have an impact on their own environment. Such student committees have also provided guidance for the development of dispute resolution programs, counseling, etc.

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

Because violence is a multifaceted problem, related to such complex, deeply-rooted societal conditions as poverty, racism, joblessness and hopelessness, the epidemic of violence must be attacked on many fronts. None of the strategies already planned or proposed can succeed without also giving attention to these root causes of violence.

Again, we have learned much from the violence prevention work of the last decade. In particular, we know that children are most vulnerable to gangs and substance abuse when they have had little or no success in school, when they feel alienated from adults and a caring environment, and when they lack personal esteem and a possible vision for their future. We know that there are identifiable risk factors which can help us target those in our communities and schools who are most likely to be caught up in a cycle of violent behavior. We know that creativity and flexibility are essential elements in designing strategies to address violence. We know that the approach taken by the state and by each of its communities must be comprehensive and collaborative. We know that, regardless of how difficult the circumstances, we must never give up on young people and their ability to learn.

The following actions and recommendations acknowledge and build on these insights.

THE PLAN OF ACTION Continued

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29. To establish a basis for school success among children who would otherwise be at risk of academic failure, the State Board of Education will seek to expand the Prekindergarten Program to serve *all* 3-5-year-old children identified as at-risk. This will include efforts to address the lack of classroom space, which is limiting program expansion.

30

30. To provide students with a strong foundation for academic success in school, the State Board of Education and each local school district should make a commitment to ensuring that all children learn to read well and with comprehension before the third grade. To this end, the state funds for reading improvement, which may now be spent for grades K-6, should be targeted exclusively for grades K-3. The use of these funds should be limited to activities and materials which supplement rather than supplant the regular reading activities in these grades. In addition, the State Board of Education will work with local school districts and parents to promote a variety of strategies to help all students meet the goal of reading proficiency.

31

31. To achieve successful learning by all children, each local school district should emphasize the use of teaching strategies which respond to the individual differences among students. The State Board of Education will provide leadership and support for this emphasis, with special attention to the value of technology in engaging students in the learning process.

    The State Board of Education will also promote the development of alternative learning opportunities for students who may not succeed in a traditional classroom. To this end, the State Board will include $1 million in its FY97 budget request to support the planning and implementation of alternative education options which are based on components identified as successful with at-risk and disruptive youth.

32

32. To provide students with a strong foundation for dealing with the challenges of their lives, the State Board of Education will join in the efforts of the *Character Counts Coalition*. This national partnership has engaged a variety of organizations and individuals in an effort to improve the character of America's young people and combat violence, dishonesty and irresponsibility. Special attention is given to

the "six pillars of character": trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

33

33. To ensure that young children and their parents are aware of the dangers of guns and gangs, the State Board of Education will work with the State Police to develop or identify an age-appropriate curriculum similar to the Violence Prevention/Gang Awareness Program (VEGA) which can be used in grades K-4. This should be appropriate for use by school counselors and teachers, as well as by uniformed police.

34

The State Board and the Attorney General will actively promote education about the dangers of guns and other weapons for students of all ages and for their parents.

34. The State Board of Education will provide leadership and support for efforts to reduce the violence to which children and youth are exposed through movies, television and video games. Particular attention will be given to making parents aware of the presence and potential impact of such violence.

35

35. The State Board of Education, in collaboration with victim advocacy groups, will provide leadership in helping teachers and other school staff to (1) identify children who are victims and/or witnesses of violence and and (2) respond and refer them for appropriate intervention/ assistance.

36

36. To make maximum use of community resources, local school districts should establish both formal and informal agreements with local law enforcement and social service agencies. One aspect of these agreements should be a plan for working with the parents of disruptive children and youth, many of whom do not have the knowledge and skills needed for dealing with their own children.

37

37. To give young people a viable economic future, the State Board of Education will work with appropriate agencies to increase the training and employment opportunities for youth and young adults who are alienated or disconnected from education and out of the labor market.

38

This will include the promotion of economic development in areas identified as high unemployment and high violence.

38. To ensure that violence prevention efforts related to schools are coordinated with other violence prevention initiatives, the State Board of Education will be an active partner in the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority, supporting its mission and collaborating in its work.

As a member of this group, the State Superintendent of Education will ask the Authority to address the following issues:

a) the need to identify specific measures which will restrict access to guns by minors and increase the penalties for those who make such weapons available, either intentionally or unintentionally;

b) the need to resolve issues associated with the care and custody of children who have been prosecuted under the Juvenile Court Act and for whom the Department of Children and Family Services is no longer responsible;

c) the need to review the array of state-supported projects and initiatives designed to provide a coordinated support system for children and families (including Project Success, InTouch, etc.) and recommend to the Governor and the General Assembly those actions which will ensure comprehensive, coordinated and accessible services for every community;

d) the need to develop a model protocol for identification of community risk factors and strategies for community collaboration; and

e) the need for social agencies, especially the Department of Children and Family Services, to provide school personnel with information about children who are at risk of child abuse or similar violent circumstances that will have an impact on their education.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

This plan would be incomplete if it did not address issues associated with implementation, progress reviews, and updating on a regular basis.

The following actions are intended to address these matters.

39. The state education agency will establish an organizational structure, including project teams composed of staff and external experts, to provide leadership, coordination and implementation of State Board actions related to violence prevention and intervention.

40. The state education agency technology staff will maintain an awareness of technological developments that can either reduce or contribute to violence and disruptive behavior in schools. This information will be shared with local school districts.

41. The State Superintendent will convene a group of Illinois educators to consider the current and future relationships between special education programs and services for children with behavior disorders, the Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program, other alternative educational programs, and alternative schools for disruptive youth. The issues to be addressed will include, but not be limited to, the populations to be served by these programs and how to maximize their impact.

42. The State Board, in cooperation with local school districts, the State Police and others, will develop a process for collecting valid, reliable and consistent information about the incidence of school violence. This process should replace other related data collection activities.

43. The State Board of Education will establish a recognition program to acknowledge the accomplishments of schools/communities that have made significant progress in combating school violence.

44

44. For at least the next five years, the State Board of Education will convene an annual summit on school violence, with public reporting of progress, a review of strategies, a refocusing of direction as needed, and a recommitment to the safety of Illinois public schools.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about violence-related problems in Illinois schools and/or the State Board's efforts to address these problems, contact Lee Patton, Executive Assistant to the State Board of Education, 100 N. First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001 or upatton@spr6.isbe.state.il.us. Phone inquiries may be directed to 217/782-9560.

WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: THE CHALLENGE AND THE VISION

VISION STATEMENT

As we approach the 21st century, there is broad-based agreement that the education we provide for our children will determine America's future role in the community of nations, the character of our society, and the quality of our individual lives. Thus, education has become the most important responsibility of our nation and our state, with an imperative for bold new directions and renewed commitments.

To meet the global challenges this responsibility presents, the State of Illinois will provide the leadership necessary to guarantee access to a system of high-quality public education. This system will develop in all students the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that will enable all residents to lead productive and fulfilling lives in a complex and changing society. All students will be provided appropriate and adequate opportunities to learn to:

- communicate with words, numbers,visual images, symbols and sounds;
- think analytically and creatively, and be able to solve problems to meet personal, social and academic needs;
- develop physical and emotional well-being;
- contribute as citizens in local, state, national and global communities;
- work independently and cooperatively in groups;
- understand and appreciate the diversity of our world and the interdependence of its peoples;
- contribute to the economic well-being of society; and
- continue to learn throughout their lives.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the State Board of Education is to enable all Illinois students to become confident, self-sufficient and productive citizens. To this end, the Board establishes policies that systematically support an everchanging, lifelong learning process. Furthermore, it acts as an advocate, provider, and broker of community, family and state resources and services that ensure the accomplishment of the State's Goals for Learning.

ILLINOIS GOALS

1. Each Illinois public school student will exhibit mastery of the learner outcomes defined in the State Goals for Learning, demonstrate the ability to solve problems and perform tasks requiring higher-order thinking skills, and be prepared to succeed in our society and the workforce. All people of Illinois will be literate, life-long learners who are knowledgeable about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and able to contribute to the economic and social well-being of our society.

2. All Illinois public school students will attend schools which are safe and free of violence and drugs. Such schools will provide an environment which is conducive to learning and promotes respect among all students and staff.

3. All Illinois public school students will be served by an education delivery system which focuses on student outcomes; promotes maximum flexibility for shared decision making at the local level; and has an accountability process which includes rewards, interventions and assistance for schools.

4. All Illinois public school students will have access to schools and classrooms with highly qualified and effective professionals who ensure that students achieve high levels of learning.

5. All Illinois public school students will attend schools which effectively use technology as a resource to support student learning and improve operational efficiency.

6. All Illinois public school students will attend schools which actively develop the support, involvement and commitment of parents and their community through the establishment of partnerships and/or linkages to ensure the success of all students.

7. Every Illinois public school student will attend a school that is supported by an adequate, equitable, stable and predictable system of finance.

8. Each child in Illinois will receive the support services necessary to enter the public school system ready to learn and progress successfully through school. The public school system will serve as a leader in collaborative efforts among private and public agencies so that comprehensive and coordinated health, human and social services reach children and their families.

Developed by citizens of Illinois through a process supported by the Governor, the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Business Roundtable. Adopted as a centerpiece for school improvement efforts, revised February 1996. Printed by the authority of the State of Illinois.

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
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Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois • July 1996 8M 011-03 No. 026

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